



Making Life Easier
888-874-7290



Getting Real About Diet and Exercise

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You might want to be healthy and satisfied with how you look and feel, but you might also be overwhelmed by the prospect of choosing and making the needed changes. When it comes to nutrition and fitness, most everyone has an opinion or remedy and many of these contradict, creating confusion. Add to that what you're up against in lifelong habits, genetics, motivation, etc. and it doesn't seem worth it.

But it is worth it to make any change, no matter how small, that could improve your health. The bottom line: Make the change realistic, or it may not last. See whether the tips that follow can help you move forward to better health.

Shedding some baggage

Try to let go of unrealistic attitudes about your performance, health, looks, etc. If everyone in your family tree tends to be curvy, aiming for a stick-like shape could set you up for failure. Set perfectionism and the media's idea of beauty aside and ask yourself:

- What weight is realistic and healthy for me?
- What immediate and future benefits do I want from proper nutrition and exercise? (energy, mood lift, longevity, etc.)
- What healthy choices and changes am I willing to make?

Right here, right now

You want to look and feel better. Over time, with healthy changes, you will. In the meantime:

- Keep in mind that you have a choice—continue to beat yourself up and feel depressed about your shape, or cultivate an attitude of acceptance.
- Take a break from fashion magazines—those ultra-thin, computer-enhanced images are not the norm.
- Find a few outfits that flatter your current shape. Consult a professional if you need to.
- Experiment with makeup, hairstyles, accessories, etc. to enhance your best features.
- Smile more—it's free and it brightens your face.
- Start to notice what you consider attractive in others. Is it truly only a thin body?
- Every time you catch yourself thinking critical thoughts of yourself, think, "STOP!"

Pressing on to better health

There's no way around it—for the best health, you need to eat right and exercise. Try to:

- **Stay encouraged.** Research shows that regular exercise and proper nutrition make your body fit even if you're still overweight.
- Rather than eliminate “bad” foods from your diet, **reduce your portion sizes and add “good” foods** by adding a fruit, vegetable and whole grain wherever you can.
- **Be sure to eat breakfast and, if possible, drink more milk** (low-fat)—two keys to successful weight loss according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- **Replace sugary sodas and alcohol with water** whenever you can.
- **Don't fret over diet trends** . Know that weight gain or loss is primarily the result of calories eaten versus calories burned. Eat more than you burn and you'll gain weight.
- **Find 200 calories a day to give up**—that might be the butter you use on a roll or a handful of chips—and you can lose a few pounds a month.
- **If permissible, take a brisk walk during your lunch break** and eat lunch at your desk.
- **Wear a pedometer and note the number of steps you take each day.** Strive to increase that number by at least 1,000 steps (park farther away, use the stairs, etc.)
- **Ditch the scales for a while.** If you just have to check your progress, measure your hips, waist, a thigh, etc. no more than once a week or use a tight article of clothing as your gauge.
- **Consider working with a registered dietitian, counselor or personal trainer** if you need help getting “unstuck” from unhealthy habits.

A few more tips

Registered dietitian Martha McKittrick advises you to make a small change or two in your health habits and then wait until you're comfortable with it before making the next small change. She also recommends that you:

- Write down an eating plan for a few days at a time.
- Stock the kitchen with healthy food.
- Bear in mind that there is no one diet for every person—try a variety of healthy foods.
- Be patient if you have a genetic tendency to be overweight. It might be more difficult for you to lose weight, but it is not impossible.

Remember, any change you are willing to make toward better health is better than no change at all.

Resources

Changing for Good by James O. Prochaska. Quill, 1995.

Fit and Fat: The 8-Week Heart Zones Program by Sally Edwards. Alpha Books, 2003.

You Are More Than You Weigh by Sharon Sward. Wholesome Publishing Company, 1998.

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